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Jason Maclochlainn, *The Victorian Tailor: Techniques and Patterns* (London: Batsford, 2011), 160 pp., colour and line illustrations throughout. £19.99. ISBN 978 1 906388 89 8

Jason Maclochlainn is a self taught period tailor, clearly obsessed by the craft and by a strong desire to know more about it. In his introduction he writes of a plan to produce a more comprehensive study - but acknowledges the need to balance this with the interests of a potential readership. Hence this general introduction to men's tailoring which aims to cover a lot of bases, suggesting directions for the motivated reader. The book comes with a forward by R L Shep, who has for many years given new life to old tailoring manuals through his publishing endeavours.

The book is handsomely produced and clearly organised, with sections on pattern cutting systems, the Victorian workroom, the tools and sewing skills necessary, further sections on men's period patterns and how to use these, tailoring techniques, fabrics and suppliers. The book's aim is practical - to get those with an interest in learning how to make tailored nineteenth century clothes for men, started on the road to experience. The book is written in the first person in many places, and one feels the author's infectiously enthusiastic presence at one's shoulder.

The writing and compiling of this book cannot have been easy simply because there is so much information to be considered. In order not to bewilder the reader and the potential tailor the author has simplified and streamlined the history and the craft techniques to a workable starting point from which to develop. It is not easy to communicate the craft of tailoring through words alone and so there are many diagrams to help, and the author has tried to deliver his information as clearly and unambiguously as possible. Even so, perhaps watching someone perform an operation is the only satisfactory way to pick up a skill. The author counsels patience and practice.

The book is not scholarly, it has other objectives. Consequently, I would recommend that readers also consult Aldrich's essay on the development of pattern cutting systems (Textile History, November 2002), should they wish to know more about their origins. The fact that tailors also constructed women's clothes and that from the earliest days, drafts for women's tailored garments appeared in books of drafts and patterns, could have been given some discussion. There are many illustrations reproduced from fashion periodicals and cutting diagrams from tailoring manuals, but their sources are not credited, although descriptive tags and dates are provided. The tailoring information, the techniques of sewing and manipulation and applying canvas interlinings, is largely for the period 1875 - 1900. The patterns provided cover the period 1850-1900 (A quick reckoning shows that the book has 21 patterns for the period 1850-1900, while Waugh's *The Cut of Men's Clothes* has 35 patterns for the period 1840-1900). These are reproduced from tailoring manuals and aim to give a few representative garments for each decade. They carry no drafting instructions (unlike the originals in trade books and journals) and the author recommends that they be scaled up using the system of graduated tapes. This is explained in some detail and was adopted by the author simply because the system was much in use during the Victorian period (otherwise a much larger book would be required to convey the sheer number of drafting systems in use). What the book necessarily misses out on is the extensive range of garments available to the nineteenth century gentleman and for this, the reader would have to look to the original sources or reprints. But it is this kind of widening of enquiry that the book encourages.

DAVID WILCOX